THE DANGEROUS IMPOSTURE OF QUAKERISM,

REPRESENTED

In two LETTERS to a FRIEND.

The SECOND EDITION.

ALSO J. Jeffery.

A

BRIEF DISCOURSE

CONCERNING

The true NATURE and pernicious CONSEQUENCES

OF

CANTING about RELIGION.

Smith Antiq. - 28

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THE DANGEROUS IMPOSTURE OF QUAKERISM,

REPRESENTED

In two LETTERS to a FRIEND.

SIR,

HAVING lately read George Fox's journal, I ſend you the obſervations I made concerning The Dangerous Impoſture of Quakeriſm: and that which I am to acquaint you with upon this ſubject, may be divided into what relates to its real author and doctrine, or to its pretended original and proof.

I. The real author of this impoſture was George Fox; and it is worth our taking notice of, what his true character was. He was, when he began to publiſh his doctrine, a young man, who had a religious education, and, in the nineteenth and twentieth years of his age, was exerciſed with ſtrong temptations to deſpair, and was under great troubles and diſorders of mind on that account, ſuch as could not be removed by thoſe miniſters that he had recourſe unto.

Upon this, he betook himſelf to retirement and ſolitude, night and day, to much faſting, reſervedneſs, and melancholy; and, eſtranging himſelf

ſelf from ſociety, went alone into ſolitary places with his bible, and his own thoughts.

By degrees, he imagined that God made known his will to him; and "opened to him," as his phraſe is, that "the light of Chriſt within man," was to be his inſtructor and guide in matters of religion. And, through this imagination, he ſometimes gained comfort and joy; and by degrees arrived at extreme preſumption and confidence.

When he affirmed, that Chriſt was in him, he did not mean that the man Jeſus of Nazareth was in him; but that the ſame divinity that is called the Word and the Light, John i. 1---7---13. which was in Jeſus of Nazareth, was alſo, tho' not in the ſame meaſure, in George Fox. But the Word and the Light is the ſame divinity, as all orthodox Chriſtians mean by the ſecond perſon in the bleſſed Trinity, 1 John v. 7. His fundamental doctrine then was this; that the ſecond perſon in the bleſſed Trinity dwells, as truly, in every quaker, though not as much as he did in Jeſus of Nazareth. But although the third perſon in the Trinity, viz. the Holy Ghoſt, dwells in other men; yet the Word or Son, i. e. the ſecond perſon in the Trinity, never did dwell in any man, but in the man Jeſus of Nazareth only, who was the Chriſt of God, as in him the Word was made fleſh, John i. 14. or the Son of God was incarnate, and who is over all, God bleſſed for ever. Rom. ix. 5.

But, for George Fox to affirm, that Chriſt was in him, is an exceſs of error and profaneneſs, ſuch as no ſober Chriſtian, who knows, that by this his bleſſed ſaviour is diſtinguiſhed from, and exalted

alted above the higheſt angels, can endure to hear without the utmoſt abhorrence and abomination.

This is the fundamental error and prodigious deluſion that the author of quakeriſm entertained and ſet up in the world; and this his followers defend and maintain to this day.

Then he communicated his notions to others, and at their convincement, as he ſpeaks, great horror and trembling fell upon them; inſomuch, that ſome of the company affirmed, that not only the perſons, but alſo the church itſelf, in which they ſometimes were, did ſhake, and they were afraid it ſhould fall upon their heads.

The extravagancy of the diſcourſes and actions of this perſon, is manifeſt in his life. Upon the conſideration of which, together with the preternatural effects his addreſſes had upon his converts, I made theſe queſtions, 1. Whether there were fuller evidence that Oliver's porter in Bedlam was a madman, than that George Fox was ſo? And 2. Whether, ſetting aſide the teſtimony of the evangeliſts, who ſay that demoniacs were brought to our Saviour to be cured; it be more manifeſt from their words and actions, that thoſe perſons were poſſeſſed with the devil, than that George Fox, and other primitive quakers, were ſuch poſſeſt perſons?

Now, every one knows, that a quaker receives the abſurd doctrines, and imitates the melancholy behaviour of George Fox, who was the real author and the original pattern of this religious madneſs.

II. The doctrines of quakeriſm may be diſtinguiſhed into what is pernicious, and what is trifling.

Firſt, The pernicious doctrines of quakeriſm are ſo, with reſpect to human ſociety, and to Chriſtian religion.

1. The doctrines of quakeriſm, which are pernicious to human ſociety are theſe;

(1.) The denying the lawfulneſs of an oath, even in courts of judicature: an oath being the higheſt aſſurance one man can give another of his veracity; and the caſes in which an oath is demanded, being ſuch, wherein the higheſt aſſurance is reaſonable, becauſe the eſtates and lives of men are in queſtion. But this doctrine of quakeriſm deſtroys this ſecurity; under pretence, that every oath is a groſs ſin.

(2.) The denying outward reſpect of perſons, ſuch as putting off the hat in the preſence of ſuperiors is among us, weakens the reverence that the greateſt part of men ought to have towards thoſe in authority; which reverence cannot, according to the opinion of all nations, otherwiſe be preſerved in the vulgar, than by viſible marks of diſtinction and diſtance. But, ſuch formalities requiſite to government, the quakers deny, under pretence that it is their neceſſary duty ſo to do; and that they have received a greater honour from God, than this which their ſuperiors require from them.

(3.) The denying the lawfulneſs of fighting, or the uſe of the carnal weapon, for private or public neceſſary defence, is a doctrine which, ſo far as it is received, weakens a nation, and renders the protection of right impoſſible, againſt thoſe who ſhall by open war, or private violence, invade it. And did not the quakers receive protection through the labours, and ſufferings, and blood of others, they would ſoon be made ſenſible, when too late, of the pernicious nature of this error.

Theſe doctrines of the quakers are pernicious to human ſociety; and therefore ought not to be received, or encouraged by any who love their rights, their liberty, and their country.

2. Be-

2. Beſides theſe, there are other errors pernicious to the Chriſtian religion; and they are ſuch as theſe:

(1.) The denying the uſe of the two ſacraments, baptiſm and the Lord's Supper, by which Chriſtians are diſtinguiſhed from infidels, and obliged to live according to the holy laws of their religion. The ſon of God judged it expedient to eſtabliſh theſe ſenſible rites for religious purpoſes, to be uſed by men who muſt live by ſenſe; but the quakers deny the obligation, uſe, and benefit of them.

(2.) Another doctrine pernicious to Chriſtian religion, is, the denying and vilifying a learned miniſtry as unneceſſary and unlawful; whereas it is not poſſible rightly to underſtand the doctrine of God delivered in the language of men, without that learning which is neceſſary to the underſtanding of that language; and ſuch neceſſary learning is very much more than an unlearned man, ſuch as George Fox was, can be aware of. Add to this, in order to the ſubverting of a learned miniſtry, their forbidding the payment of tythes, as if ſo doing were denying of Chriſt. By this means, they rob the miniſters of that maintenance which the laws of the land have provided for thoſe who ſpend their whole time in the ſtudy and teaching of religion; calling ſuch learned and godly miniſters of Chriſt, by the approbrious name of hirelings: though Chriſt himſelf ſaid, Luke vii. 10. "The labourer "is worthy of his hire;" and though the laws of England give every incumbent as good a title to his tythes, as any landlord hath to his rent, or to his eſtate.

(3.) Again, the quakers deny the ſufficiency of the holy ſcriptures, and pretend that no man can underſtand them, unleſs he hath the ſame ſpirit by which the doctrine of the ſcriptures was given

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forth. Nor will they, that I can find, allow any one to be in that ſpirit which is neceſſary to the underſtanding of the ſcriptures, who is not a quaker. This is to affirm, that God has ſo ſpoken in the ſcriptures, which contain his revelation, as no man can, without a repeated revelation, underſtand what he has ſpoken in them; and that the quakers only have this privilege. This doctrine is manifeſtly pernicious to the Chriſtian religion, whereby arbitrary enthuſiaſm is ſet up for the interpreter of the written word of God, and rule of religion.

And now I appeal to any reaſonable man, whether the doctrines aforeſaid be not pernicious to human ſociety, and to Chriſtian religion? I appeal to George Fox's journal, whether theſe be not doctrines of quakeriſm?

Secondly, Beſides theſe pernicious doctrines, there are others which are trifling; ſuch as theſe,

1. Their making it a kind of religious duty, to ſay thou, and thee, to a ſingle perſon, and pretending it unlawful to ſay, you, to ſuch an one; which, at worſt, were but an impropriety of ſpeech. But if cuſtom be the only rule of language, as certainly it is; then is you, in converſation, good and lawful Engliſh when uſed to a ſingle perſon, or to many; though thou be only the ſingular number, and ye be only the plural; whereas you is both ſingular and plural. But to make religion of this, is trifling.

2. Again, to adhere religiouſly to the particular Engliſh words, yea and nay, is another weakneſs, when yes, and no, are as good Engliſh, and more commonly uſed.

To theſe doctrines which are trifling, we may add,

1. Their peculiar cuſtom of marriages and burials: their unreaſonable oppoſition to the form

and

and manner of ſolemnization of marriage, eſtabliſhed by law, as a diſtinguiſhing ſeparation from other Chriſtians, who univerſally, on ſuch occaſions, have the ſolemn prayers and benediction of the miniſters of Chriſt; their refuſing to bury their dead in any place but by themſelves, as if they would extend the marks of their religious deluſion beyond their lives.

2. Their refuſing to wear lace and light colours, as undoubted marks of pride in the world's children, i. e. other Chriſtians; and at the ſame time to allow of flowered ſilks, and richer velvet, in friends, i. e. quakers, though of mean condition; is more truly the part of ſhameleſs impudence, than of Chriſtian gravity. And the green apron is almoſt as ſingular, as the reaſon I am told has been given for it, viz. that Adam and Eve wore green aprons. By theſe doctrines and cuſtoms, the quakers are diſtinguiſhed; and of theſe doctrines George Fox was the author.

III. The pretended original of theſe doctrines George ſaid was divine, and that God opened theſe things to him, by the word of the Lord that came unto him; and that God ſent him to teach theſe doctrines, the fundamentals of which are, that the light of Chriſt is that which every man ought to be taught by; and that, ſo far as men are not inlightened by this, the ſcripture is a dead letter unto them. He that can believe ſuch a man as George Fox, who never had any learned education, nor had lived long enough for ſuch an education, when he began to entertain and publiſh theſe opinions; who by the diſorders of temptation, and near approaches to deſpair, wanted the true and free uſe of his reaſon, and accordingly diſcourſed more like a religious madman, than a prophet or apoſtle; who had no other teacher of this doctrine, but his

own diſturbed imagination, as is evident, by the folly and confuſion of all his diſcourſes: I ſay he, who can believe ſuch a man as this to be taught of God, meerly becauſe he ſays it, one would think, had as little uſe of reaſon, as George had when he became the firſt quaker. No ſenſible man can reliſh ſuch diſcourſes as thoſe of George Fox, in which he uſes the holy ſcriptures as a phraſe book, and, in a ſenſe never deſigned by thoſe words, delivers his own doctrines; unleſs he lays aſide the uſe of reaſon in matters of religion: without the uſe of which, it is impoſſible there ſhould be any ſuch thing as religion among men. But this may be excuſed in a quaker, whoſe religion indeed is but the ſpectre of religion murdered by ignorance and enthuſiaſm.

I confeſs I have ſo much regard to ſenſe and reaſon, and ſo honourable a perſuaſion of God and his wiſdom, that there is no proof ſufficient to convince me, that God ſpake by ſuch a man as this. But,

IV. There is proof which he pretends to, and that no leſs than, 1. Voices; and 2. Viſions; and 3. Propheſy; and 4. Miracles; and 5. Diſcerning of ſpirits; and 6. The knowledge of nature, and the whole creation; and 7. Being in the ſame ſtate that Adam was before the fall: which are more than ever any prophet or apoſtle attained to.

To which add, for a colour, the ſufferings of George Fox, which I confeſs were very great, as he ſays; but they manifeſt nothing, excepting the obſtinate folly, and inſolent provocation, of him that ſuffered; and ſometimes the vices and paſſions of thoſe by whom he ſuffered: and, 2. The judgments which, he ſays, befel the enemies of him and his doctrine. Some of theſe pretences

prove

prove nothing; and others of them need be proved themſelves.

And now, I deſire, if any doubt the truth of what I have ſaid, that they would read George Fox's journal, as I have done, and ſee if what I affirm of him, and his doctrine, be not found there. I think no man can expoſe this ſect ſo much as George Fox's journal expoſeth it: and, therefore, becauſe I believe quakeriſm to be a dangerous and wicked impoſture, I deſire men would read the hiſtory of its author. And let not any who call themſelves friends, count me their enemy, for really I am not ſuch, but do heartily pity them as religious madmen; and never did them any harm, and am reſolved I never will.

I would expoſtulate with them, out of compaſſion to their ſouls, but that they ſeem ſo deſperately conceited and prejudiced, that it muſt be in vain. God grant them the true light of religious knowledge and wiſdom, that they may ſee the error of their way, and be converted to the acknowledgment of the truth as it is in Jeſus.

And as for thoſe who are not yet of this perſuaſion, but think favourably of it; I exhort them, in the fear of God, 1. Never to part with the uſe of their reaſon in the ſtudy of religion, where there is the beſt exerciſe, and the greateſt need of it. And 2. Never to think, that what God has revealed, or made known in, and by, the ſcriptures of truth, cannot be underſtood, or cannot be known, without a repeated revelation; i. e. unleſs it be made known again. We are ſure there is no ſuch revelation now, and that all pretences to it, ſuch as George Fox made, are impoſture. The good God deliver his Church from this, and from all other impoſtures, and make men throughly ſenſible,

ſible, that to aſcribe their own wild and fooliſh imaginations to the ſpirit of God, has in it the nature of blaſphemy.

I am

Your friend

and ſervant.

A

A BRIEF

ANSWER

TO A

PAMPHLET,

Entituled,

The FOLLY of a LIBELLER, &c.

By the AUTHOR of

The Dangerous Impoſture of QUAKERISM.

In a Second LETTER to a FRIEND.

SIR,

IT is too manifeſt, by George Fox's journal, that he wanted religious knowledge and a ſound mind: and it was no diſparagement to thoſe miniſters he conſulted, that they could not give him ſatisfaction and keep him from error. Had they wanted ſkill or care to inſtruct thoſe perſons which belonged to their charge, this had been their ſhame; and ſo it ever will be. But, when great devotion, and obſtinate ignorance, which either proceeds from ſpiritual pride or is in conjunction with it, ſhall hinder any from receiving that inſtruction and eſtabliſhment, which their miniſters are as certainly qualified to give, as it is certain theſe men need; this ought not to be made a direct accuſation againſt thoſe miniſters, becauſe it would be a falſe one.

one. Nor ought it to be made the occaſion of inſinuáting *, concerning many of the miniſters of the Church of England, at this day, that they are inſufficient; becauſe none can be inſufficient in the account of thoſe, who deny the neceſſity of learning in any, and who affirm that every man is taught of God within him. What work one, who is ignorant, devout, and crazed, would make, alone, in a hollow-tree †, with ſuch a book as the bible, cannot eaſily be imagined before-hand: but what work George Fox did make, we know by the event, and by the ſect of quakers which ſprung from him. It is no crime to take a bible with one, into a wood ‡; nor is it a crime to take a ſword too; but we ſee, by this example, that it is as dangerous truſting a mad-man alone, with the one, as with the other.

For proof, that George Fox was ſuch a perſon, I appeal to the hiſtory of his life, who, upon that account, deſerved nothing but pity. But thoſe who take up their doctrine of religion from ſuch an one, had need think well, what they do; eſpecially, when George Fox, and his firſt followers, had more of the character, which the goſpel gives of the demoniacs, than of that, which it gives of the diſciples of Chriſt. So contrary were thoſe who were taught by Chriſt without them, to thoſe, who pretend to be taught by Chriſt within them.

God be merciful to men of great devotion and of little judgment, and keep them humble and modeſt, honeſt and teachable. Whatever any adverſary may think ‖, it was a tender ſenſe of ſuch men's danger, which put me at firſt upon conſidering, what might be the reaſon of their becom-

* Journal, page 4. † Journal, page 7. ‡ Page 4.
‖ Page 12.

ing quakers; and for that end, and for no worſe end than that, I read George Fox's journal. I do not think that all profeſſed quakers are men of ſmall parts and great ignorance; but thoſe of them, who are ſuch, I ſuppoſe to be ſincere in their pretences: and it was concerning them that I enquired. It was for warning to ſuch, that I took a view of the original of quakers, and by that ſmall paper, called, The dangerous impoſture of quakeriſm, recommended the reading of George Fox's journal as an antidote againſt quakeriſm. Without ſome ſuch warning, an ignorant man might have reliſhed his cant, and have been tempted to receive his errors: but, ſuch warning, a knowing and judicious Chriſtian needed not; the journal itſelf, being to him a ſufficient antidote againſt what it teaches. The ſame reaſons which induced me to write the firſt letter, have prevailed with me to write this ſecond; and ſo explain and purſue the intention of the former, by anſwering what R. A. hath publiſhed againſt it. Having therefore obſerved, that R. A's book does contain,

I. A charge againſt me, diſperſed throughout the whole diſcourſe: and,

II. A defence of quakeriſm, and of George Fox, according to the method of my other paper: I ſhall conſider both. And,

I. The charge he makes againſt me, is, his accuſing me of great

1. Faults: and,
2. Defects.

1. The great faults he charges me with, are ignorance and folly, diſingenuity and falſhood, pride and defamation, envy and malice, prophaneneſs and blaſphemy; and that for libelling quakeriſm, and George Fox in that paper, or libel, called, The dangerous impoſture of quakeriſm.

In

In anſwer to which reproaches, I ſhall ſay no more than this, let any indifferent man read The dangerous impoſture of quakeriſm, and compare it with the journal of George Fox, and judge whether the author of that paper deſerved ſuch a cenſure, for writing it.

2. The great defect he charges me with, is, that I have given no proof of the repreſentation I made of the original of quakeriſm, out of George Fox; having not quoted any one paſſage out of the journal, which conſiſts of above ſix hundred pages in folio.

To this I anſwer, that my manifeſt deſign in that paper being to give an account of quakeriſm, from the hiſtory of the firſt quaker, I made a ſynopſis or abridgment of George Fox's journal; and, the whole journal is proof of what I affirmed. If 1. I had brought all the proof of this, I muſt have tranſcribed the whole journal; and 2. no man can open the journal, in any place, but he will find proof of ſomething that I have ſaid. I did alſo, 3. in that paper, appeal unto the journal, concerning the truth of what I ſaid; ſo that this charge of want of proof, is groundleſs.

The charge againſt me is diſperſed throughout the whole book. The defence of quakeriſm, and of George Fox, is diſtinguiſhed according to the method of the paper R. A. writes againſt: and,

II. The defence which R. A. makes of quakeriſm, and of George Fox, is this; that the quakers teach no other doctrine, than what Chriſt and his apoſtles taught: and therefore to charge quakeriſm with impoſture, or any other ill, is to charge Chriſt and his apoſtles. This he proves by quotations out of ſcripture, and by affirmations of his own, applying thoſe quotations to the quakers doctrine,

doctrine, and in the quakers way; i. e. as we may apply phraſes picked out of any book to any ſubject.

To this therefore, I anſwer, in general, that it will be manifeſt to any one, who reads thoſe paſſages of ſcripture with the context, and underſtands what he reads, that the meaning of thoſe words in the bible, is nothing at all to the purpoſe, for which they are quoted by R. A. But, in ſuch manner enthuſiaſts are wont to abuſe the holy ſcriptures, canting in phraſes borrowed from thence. And, if this be admitted for proof, any doctrine may be proved by ſuch quotations, out of any book.

This is evident by what R. A. ſays out of the holy ſcriptures, in defence of the fundamental error of quakeriſm *; and by what he ſays in defence of the particular errors of quakeriſm †, i. e. againſt the firſt and ſecond parts of the paper he oppoſes.

Firſt, The fundamental error of quakeriſm, is concerning the light within them. By the light they mean the ſame, that we do, by the λόγος or the ſecond perſon in the bleſſed Trinity, or the divinity of the ſon; which they think is in every man, for kind, though not for meaſure, as it was in Jeſus of Nazareth. But, as this is their fundamental error, that the ſecond perſon in the bleſſed Trinity is in them, ſo there is not one of thoſe places which R. A. brings to prove the light within them ‡, which does any more prove that Chriſt the light is in them, than if thoſe expreſſions were uſed concerning the ſun, it would be affirmed, that the body of the ſun was in every man's head. "God "commanded the light to ſhine out of darkneſs, &c. "I am the light of the world, &c. While ye have "the light, &c." Though the ſun gives light to men, yet ſuch expreſſions would not import that

* Pages 4, 5, 6. † Pages 7.—10. ‡ Page 5.

the

the ſun, which gives that light, is in men. And ſo Chriſt, though he gives ſpiritual light, i. e. religious inſtruction, to men, yet is he not properly in them. It is only the light, i. e. the information and inſtruction, he gives, that is in men, when it is received by them, from without them; viz. from the holy ſcriptures. So that notwithſtanding what R. A. ſays, or what any others have ſaid, the pretence of Chriſt the light and word, i. e. the ſecond perſon in the bleſſed trinity, being in men, is an error; and this is granted fundamental among the quakers *.

Secondly, The particular errors of quakeriſm, are of that nature, which I affirmed them to be. For 1. as to thoſe errors which are pernicious to human ſociety; it is evident,

(1.) That he who denies to make oath, denies the aſſurance which an oath contains; this is manifeſt: and, that the want of ſuch an aſſurance, in great caſes, is hurtful to ſociety, is no leſs manifeſt. Alſo, that it is an error to hold every oath unlawful, is abundantly proved by thoſe who have written upon that ſubject †, by whom thoſe paſſages in St. Matth. v. 34. and St. Jam. v. 12. alledged to the contrary, are ſo fully anſwered, that they need not be anſwered again.

(2.) The ſame is manifeſt concerning denying the outward ſigns of reverence to ſuperiors, and treating the greateſt men as maſters do their ſervants and boys, calling them by their chriſtian names: and alſo

(3.) Concerning refuſing to fight; viz. that governors loſe ſo much of that diſtinction and diſtance, which are uſeful to the maintaining their authority, by the one; and ſo much of the ſtrength of their

* Page 6. † Vid. Abp. TILLOTSON's Sermon on Heb. vi. 16.

people,

people, which is neceſſary for the public ſafety and defence, by the other.

Againſt this, it is in vain to talk of inward honour, and of hopes that all wars and violence will, in time, ceaſe: for, ſo long as force is uſed, and cannot be repelled but by force; ſo long as inward reverence of government is in moſt men preſerved very much, if not chiefly, by that diſtinction and diſtance which outward ſigns of reverence make; theſe opinions and practices to the contrary, will be injurious to government and to human ſociety.

2. The errors ſaid to be contrary and pernicious to Chriſtian religion, are really ſo. For,

(1.) As Chriſt has * made the "eating of bread "and drinking of wine in remembrance of him," neceſſary by his command; ſo it is directly contrary to the quakers declaring it unneceſſary in their doctrine. Nor can the allowing of the inward acts of the mind, excuſe the neglecting of the outward acts of the body, in eating and drinking. Again

(2.) So far as learning is uſeful to religion; ſo far as the knowledge of languages and of philoſophy; ſo far as the knowledge of the idioms of ſpeech, of the cuſtoms of people, of the hiſtory of time relating to the bible, is uſeful to the right underſtanding of it: ſo far the decrying ſuch learning, and the unjuſt denying the legal maintenance of thoſe who ſhould be at leiſure to gain it, is prejudicial to Chriſtianity. And

(3.) It is to no purpoſe to ſpeak of inſpiration, and revelation, and light within, when there is no proof of it; or to ſpeak of underſtanding the bible, without ſuch learning and judgment as are neceſſary thereunto. And when the ſcriptures are underſtood, by ſuch helps as are neceſſary for the un-

* Matt. xxvi. 26. Mark xiv. 22. Luke xxii. 19.

derſtanding

derſtanding of them, there is no need or uſe of a repeated revelation from within to teach that, which is learned already from the records of an ancient ſtanding revelation without us.

Thirdly, The trifling errors and practices of the quakers, as to the peculiar manner of their ſpeech, clothing, behaviour, marriages and burials, by the religious obſervance of which they are diſtinguiſhed; they ought to be aſhamed of, as childiſh. But they inſiſt upon them as Chriſtian duties, and therefore I took notice of them; forbearing to ſay all which I knew to be true concerning their rich attire, and even concerning the green apron, as not intending to expoſe them that are concerned. It is indeed trifling without juſt cauſe to take notice of trifles; but where trifles are made duties of religion, religion is miſrepreſented thereby as a trifling thing.

I muſt add, that I never called George Fox an impoſtor, as R. A. inſinuates *, becauſe he wanted age and learning: but I called quakeriſm an impoſture, becauſe 1. It is a falſe repreſentation of religion; and 2. becauſe this is grounded on a falſe pretence to revelation. This is manifeſt from the 3d and 4th parts of my former paper, the truth of which any one may be convinced of, by reading George Fox's journal. And this R. A. does not deny †; but in the ſecond and third quotations out of the journal, made to another purpoſe, does unawares prove. R. A's purpoſe was, by thoſe quotations, to prove that George Fox was a man of a ſound mind; which, whether they do prove or no, let any one who is ſuch a man judge. But thoſe quotations prove, that George Fox pretended to revelations, and heard voices. Yet 1. there is

* Page 11. † Page 12.

no

no real proof of his pretended revelations: and 2. the quakers doctrine is such, as cannot possibly be the matter of revelation, unless the excess of folly can proceed from infinite wisdom.

To draw towards a conclusion. Sincere love to mens persons may very well consist with the greatest hatred of their gross errors, especially if their errors be such, as subvert all revealed religion; and I am persuaded the errors of the quakers do so. I may therefore be without any ill-will to the quakers persons, though I condemn their doctrines and practices; and I know I am upright in professing my compassion towards them. To affirm that George Fox is not of a sound mind, is no more malice, than to affirm it of some in Bedlam. But, let R. A. consider whether his professing love and good will to all men, be well consistent with his charging me with insincerity *. I know my own mind and intention better than he can know it, and I tell him that I am sincere; and that if he or any other shall revile me, as much as William Penn did Mr. C—— and all the clergy, in his Guide Mistaken, I will not revile again; for so I have been taught by Christ without me. I do really pity all those who are deceived, and who are sincere in professing themselves quakers; and it is with unfeigned compassion, that I observe them to be under such strong delusions, that they cannot distinguish darkness from light.

The good God give them a right use of their reason, and make them willing to be directed by the light of Christ without them. And now, sir, if after this, any friend of quakerism will reply to what I have written, he may do it, without any danger of being replied to again by me. For,

* Vid. 1 Cor. xiii. 7.

not to give you the trouble of any more letters upon this ſubject, I do again, and for the laſt time, appeal to George Fox's journal as my witneſs, and do make the reader my judge, as I did at the firſt; and ſo I leave him, to judge righteous judgment, for his own ſake, rather than for mine.

I am

Your friend and ſervant.

A BRIEF

DISCOURSE

Concerning the

TRUE NATURE

AND

PERNICIOUS CONSEQUENCES

OF

CANTING

ABOUT

RELIGION.

THE TRUE NATURE AND PERNICIOUS CONSEQUENCES OF CANTING about RELIGION.

TRUE religion is obedience to the law of God, according to ſuch meaſures, and upon ſuch principles, as God has by nature and revelation made known unto men. And as the doctrine of true religion is perfectly agreeable to the reaſon of things, to the nature of God and men; ſo the diſcourſes about religion, which are moſt rational, are moſt religious. But there is a ſort of diſcourſe about religion, which has nothing of reaſon, and very little of ſenſe in it, by which the inſtitution of religion is diſparaged, and the deſign of it is ſubverted; and this is that which we call enthuſiaſtic cant.

I. My intention is to diſcover the true nature, and

II. The pernicious conſequences, of this canting about religion.

I. The true nature of canting about religion may be underſtood thus: all that is repreſented in the holy ſcriptures, the record of true religion, as ſaid or done by God, or by any other with his approbation, is either for the promoting of virtue and holineſs, or for the reformation of ſin and vice.

That which is ſaid or done for this purpoſe, is of great extent and compaſs, and not only the things, but the forms of ſpeech concerning them, are next to innumerable.

Now that man who makes a rational and wiſe diſcourſe about religion, according to the ſcriptures, muſt explain the nature of each ſin, or duty, and muſt explain the force of each conſideration and argument which is made uſe of, to perſuade men to virtue and holineſs, and to diſſuade them from vice and wickedneſs. And the variety of forms of ſpeech, uſed in the bible, will afford large matter for illuſtration in theſe diſcourſes.

But, thoſe who pretend to enthuſiaſm, and make uſe of cant in religion, do put ſome other ſubject, in the room of virtue and holineſs, of vice and ſin; and then enlarge themſelves, in the application and accommodation of what is in ſcripture, to that new ſubject: and that ſubject of cant is a pretended ſomething of which the diſcourſer has no notion at all, or, at leaſt, no notion that is clear and diſtinct.

This enthuſiaſm and canting about religion, are not peculiar to our age and nation, but have been too common in other places and times; ſo that we may diſtinguiſh,

Firſt, The ancient; and,

Secondly, The modern cant and enthuſiaſm.

Firſt, Of the ancient cant we have a remarkable example, in the account which Irenæus gives of the Valentinian heretics, and their thirty Æcones: who alſo informs us concerning the art as well as the ſubject of their cant *. He tells us, they applied the parables of our ſaviour, the diſcourſes of the prophets, and the ſayings of the apoſtles, to quite other purpoſes, than they who firſt uſed, ever intended them; and this thoſe heretics did, by

* Lib. 1. cap. 1.

changing

changing and tranſpoſing the paſſages of ſcripture, till the words bore the ſenſe they impoſed upon them.

This Irenæus compares to the practice of one, who ſhould diſſolve the comely picture of a king, made in bugle-work, and out of the ſame ſtrings of bugles, ſhould frame the picture of an ill-favoured dog or fox; and, after ſuch a change, ſhould pretend this new ſhape is the original picture of the king which the artiſt made, and ſhould impoſe that belief upon the ignorant and fooliſh. After the ſame manner did the Valentinians deliver their fables and errors, in the words, and phraſes, and parables, of ſcripture.

This artifice, as he again ſays *, is like theirs, who ſhould take any ſubject that occurs, and deſcribe it in verſes borrowed out of Homer; and ſhould pretend that this is part of a poem of his: as he gives example in one, who repreſented Hercules as ſent by Euryſtheus unto Cerberus, in ſuch verſes as he there ſets down, out of the Iliad and Odyſſey.

We have a fuller inſtance of this in Alexander Roſs's Virgilius Evangelizans; or, The Hiſtory of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, deſcribed in the words and verſes of Virgil. By the ſame kind of application, that Roſs made Virgil an Evangeliſt; George Fox, and others, have made St. Paul and the reſt of the writers of the New Teſtament quakers. And, by the ſame art, any one author may be made to deliver the doctrine of another: Ariſtotle's philoſophy may be taught in the words of Moſes, and the religion of the Jews may be repreſented in the words of Ariſtotle.

But this is ſo groſs and notorious an abuſe of ſcripture, as no ſerious Chriſtian can judge excuſa-

* Page 36.

able, or tolerable. Such was the ancient enthuſiaſm and cant of the Valentinians, and other heretics. There is alſo,

Secondly, The modern enthuſiaſm and cant, which is either,

1. Popiſh: Or,
2. Proteſtant.

1. The popiſh cant is found among their myſtical divines; for which they have pretended revelation, and upon which they have founded ſeveral of their orders *.

Some of theſe enthuſiaſms, and cantings, have been thought inconſiſtent with, and dangerous to, the intereſt and ſuperſtition of the church of Rome; and the authors of them have been condemned, if not alſo perſecuted, as Molino and the archbiſhop of Cambray of late. Others have been judged conſiſtent with, and uſeful to the deſigns and pretences of the church of Rome, and they have been allowed and encouraged; as Sales, Thomas à Kempis, and others.

If theſe enthuſiaſts ſet up their enthuſiaſm and cant, in the ſtead of eſtabliſhed religion, or in prejudice to it, they muſt be ſuppreſſed; but if they ſet it up in conjunction with popery, and ſubſervient to it, they may be permitted.

What is enthuſiaſm in notion is cant in diſcourſe; and ſome are univerſal, and others only partial in theſe. Thoſe who are univerſal in their enthuſiaſm and cant, as Molino and Cambray ſeem inclined to be, muſt be judged dangerous, if not fatal to ſuperſtition, as being intirely in the contrary extreme. But, thoſe who have only a mixture of enthuſiaſm and cant, as Sales and Thomas à Kem-

* Biſhop STILLINGFLEET's fanaticiſm of the Roman Church, chap. iv.

pis,

pis, may be thought friendly to ſuperſtition, as having united the extremes.

2. The proteſtant enthuſiaſm and cant among us, is either that,

(1.) Of the ſchiſmatics, who ſeparate from the church of England: or,

(2.) Of ſome particular perſons, who continue in the communion of it.

(1.) The enthuſiaſm and cant of ſchiſmatics is diverſe, and may be thus diſtinguiſhed:

1. There are ſome, who make the ſubject of their cant ſo extremely looſe and general, as not to fix or explain their terms; and of this ſort, are the diſcourſes of Chriſtopher Cob of Ely, of which I ſhall give you this ſpecimen *: "He ſubmits to be betrayed into the hands of ſinners. They are a multitude into whoſe hands he is betrayed; this flatterer and ſmooth mouthed betrayer, this Judas that comes with a kiſs, and ſalutes, hail maſter! a great multitude is at his heels, he brings a whole troop after him. O that you could read the thing in yourſelves, in the work upon your own ſouls; for there is all this to be fulfilled, if you go in the ſame way with Chriſt, and tread in his ſteps. —— And now this you ſhall find true, that wherever this Judas, that betrays the ſoul, gets in; when, by his counſel, or wiſdom, or flatterings, and fair promiſes, that curſed betrayer gets in his foot, and deceives the ſoul with a kiſs, then he lets in a multitude of enemies againſt us; then comes in the ſwarmings of wickedneſs, they compaſſed me about like bees, ſays David; then comes in all the flouds of ungodlineſs, and makes the ſoul afraid; then all the foundations of the great deep are broken up, and come with violence, ready to ſweep away all before them; then the ſea brings forth abun-

* Page 350. on Matt. xxvi. 42.

dantly

dantly all manner of creeping things; then a night presently overtakes the soul, and all the beasts of the forest creep forth, strange monsters and things we never saw before, mire and dirt and strange wickedness appear." — This Cob, and those men which adhered to him, seem to aim at nothing, but such a kind of seriousness and strictness, as they were distinguished by, without adding any peculiar opinion of their own, and almost, without minding any particular opinion concerning any doctrine of Christianity.

2. Others seem to make the subject of their cant certain and determinate by their words, though those words are not understood, and cannot be explained by them; nor do they attempt, at least in their public preachments, to explain them, but they keep the particular subject, such as it is, in their thoughts, and enthusiastically expect direction, in their discourses about religion, immediately from God. Thus it is, first, with the quakers, who make the subject of their cant to be the light within them, Christ in them, Christ come in the spirit, &c; but they neither do, nor can explain what they mean, by Christ, and the light in them, in particular; but mean only, in general, immediate revelation from God. And these quakers apply and accommodate all the good that is said in scripture, to this light within them, and all the ill that is said, to the contrary darkness.

To this also they add, some pernicious, and other foolish doctrines, by which they are distinguished from other men *. An example of their cant follows: " O ye high ones, which spread yourselves, appear fair, tall, and strong, you know not God, nor yourselves to be oaks: O ye tall cedars, ye

* v. George Fox's journal, and William Penn's journal.

know not yourſelves to be ſo: the Lord is ſent, to look for fruit in his yineyard, among you: it is full of wild olives, and your wild grapes, that many are drunk with the juice of the wild grapes; and ſo the vineyard is full of briars and thorns, that the lambs and ſheep cannot paſs; but they are entangled among the briars and thorns; and the land is as a wilderneſs, that part full of ſerpents, and the earth is overgrown with weeds and nettles, that there is no feeding for the lambs, till the earth be dreſſed and overturned *.

" The word of the Lord to all the fruitleſs trees: ye dry trees, ye oaks, ye tall cedars, ye fat bulls of Baſan, ye thorns, ye briars, ye wild aſſes which ſnuff up your noſes in the top of the mountains, and the foreſts; ye high-way-ground, ye ſtony-ground, ye goats, ye wolves, ye dogs, ye ſwine, ye ſerpents, ye vulterous ones, ye beaſts, ye lions, ye ſtrong horſes neighing up and down, walking after your luſts: this is not railing, this is the ſcripture language, own your names, every one in their place; with the light ye are all ſeen, and your names come to be known, ſo every one bears your name, according to theſe natures; ye are them that cumber the ground, ye are them that are not of the light, ye are them that are to be condemned with the light, ye that are unjuſt, ye cumber the ground †."

When the oath of abjuration was impoſed, there was a declaration put out againſt popery, and all popiſh points, by ten quakers, George Fox, Francis Howgill, Edward Burrows, &c. in which are theſe words, " And if you do love the light, which comes from Chriſt, it will lead you to the church, which is in God, 1 Theſ. i. 1. and bring you to

* The viols of the wrath of God by him who is called George Fox, 1655, p. 3. † Page 9. Viols, &c.

teſtify

teſtify againſt the world, that the works thereof are evil, and will let you ſee, that the whole world lies in wickedneſs; and will let you ſee that the ſcriptures, which were declared from the light, and life, they that was in it, was in unity, and all the ſects that are amongſt them, that have the good words, and lives in their meanings and thinkings; and ſtrife, contention, perſecution, and be ſuch that hate the light, whoſe deeds be evil; which Chriſt teſtified againſt, which be ſtrangers from the life of God and Chriſt Jeſus, the covenant of promiſe; and ſo all ſuch as are with the light comprehended, ſeen, fathomed, judged and condemned."

At the end of which declaration there are ſeveral queſtions, to all the prieſts in England, &c. The 31ſt queſtion is, "Whether all that a man ſees viſibly, with a natural eye, is not natural, in the natural knowledge; and whether in this ſtate, the religion which is not pure, doth ſtand the wiſdom and knowledge, which differs not from the beaſts of the field? yea or nay?"

3. There have been thoſe who have made another ſubject of cant, which they call, the firſt and ſecond life: meaning by the former, that ſomething which is bad, and to be turned from; and by the latter, that ſomething which is good, and to be turned to. And have made a like uſe, and a like interpretation of ſcripture, as the quakers do, and have expounded the precepts of moral duties ſo, as to run them into unintelligible obſcurity, by the ſubject of their cant; particularly I remember, that the duty of the wife towards the huſband is repreſented as the ſubmiſſion of the firſt life unto the ſecond.

Theſe,

Theſe, and ſuch like ſorts of proteſtant cant, there are among thoſe, who ſeparate from the church of England.

(2.) Of thoſe that abide in the communion of the church, there are here and there ſome perſons who affect enthuſiaſm and canting, at leaſt in certain particulars, though there be no proviſion made of ſuch ſtuff, nor the leaſt countenance given to it, by the church itſelf, or the learned and godly miniſters thereof: but theſe perſons are forced to accommodate themſelves from the Romaniſts, or from the diſſenters, according as they incline. Such is the nature of canting about religion, in ſcripture phraſe; and the doctrine is ſo far from being the wiſdom of God, that it is the folly of men. The enthuſiaſt diveſts the expreſſions of ſcripture, of their original ſenſe; and puts none upon them that is either rational or intelligible. He gives ſeveral turns to a notion ſuppoſed, but not explained, or underſtood; and mixes his own paſſions with thoſe turns of ſpeech: but there is no wiſe inſtruction which the diſcourſe affords, the effect of it being only ſacred amuſement and horror. This effect meer darkneſs and noiſe will produce, when nothing elſe is ſeen or known. This canting, therefore, is diſcourſe without the benefit of diſcourſe; which ſhould convey knowledge from one man to another.

Any man, as it pleaſes him, may ſet up a new ſubject of cant, and may proceed in it, as theſe enthuſiaſts have done; either with groſs ignorance, as George Fox, or with artificial deſign, as William Penn has done, which is manifeſt by their journals. For inſtance, he may take, for the ſubject of his cant, either enmity and reconciliation,

or

or the old and the new creature, or defilement and purification, or death and reſurrection, or ſleeping and waking, or fleſh and ſpirit. Let us take death and reſurrection, and make that the ſubject of the cant following: "I am ſent by the ſpirit of life to ſpeak unto the dead; with ſuch dead, I muſt live; to ſuch dead, I muſt preach life; for the dead muſt live, and from me life muſt go forth, to quicken thoſe that have no life, but are dead. Hear the voice of life, O ye dead, O ye dry bones, O ye graves! breath ye winds, blow, blow life into the dead bones, that they may live, and hear the voice of life. How few are there in theſe dead times that are alive? How is the whole earth, every nation, every town, every houſe a ſepulchre, a charnel-houſe, a grave full of bones, of rottenneſs, of filthineſs, of ſtench! Wo, wo unto the world, becauſe of death. Stir up your ſelves, ye that are alive, unleſs ye be dead; cry aloud, ſpeak out, in the name of life command the dead to live; pity the duſt of death, break open the doors of the grave, ſay, come forth, come forth ye dead. Time was, when thou wert dead, when thou wert duſt, when thou wert aſhes, when thou wert buried, laid in darkneſs; thy head laid full low, trod upon, forgotten; but ſome one that had life, was ſent by the ſpirit of life, to bid thee live, and never left calling upon thee, crying, weeping, groaning over thee, till thy life returned, thy eyes were opened, thy fetters were broken; thou didſt ſtand upon thy feet, and walk, and leap and cry out, and join thy ſelf unto the living: be thou a quickner to others, mourn over thoſe that are in the ſame condition, that thou waſt in; frequent the ſpiritual church-yards; lift up thy lamentation over the graves; let the dead hear thy voice, and live."

I think this cant is childiſh and ſilly enough; but if any one thinks otherwiſe, it is not hard to make what may be more agreeable. Hitherto we have ſeen the true nature of canting about religion. I am,

II. To ſhew the pernicious conſequences of ſuch talking about religion, where the notion is enthuſiaſm, and the diſcourſe is cant: and, the pernicious conſequences, are,

Firſt, That it ſubverts the credit of religion among thoſe who do not reliſh that cant: and,

Secondly, It hinders the efficacy of religion, among thoſe who do reliſh it.

Firſt, This enthuſiaſtic canting about religion ſubverts the credit of it among thoſe who do not reliſh ſuch canting. For,

1. It expoſes religion to the ſcorn of thoſe who are atheiſtical and profane: and,

2. It diſparages religion, in the opinion of thoſe, who are rational and judicious.

1. This enthuſiaſtic canting about religion expoſes it to the ſcorn of thoſe, who are atheiſtical and profane. Every one that has the uſe of reaſon, and tolerable ſagacity, ſees plainly, that this canting is childiſh and ſilly; and to repreſent religion, in that manner, and in that manner only, or chiefly, as moſt religious, is in effect to burleſque it. There is nothing ſo ridiculous as folly; and cant repreſents religion under the moſt fooliſh appearance. So that, when the irreligious find religion tendered to them, under that contemptible character, they think there is juſt matter of ſcorn, in that repreſentation; and will fix that reproach upon religion itſelf, which is due only to this miſrepreſentation of it. The canting diſcourſer juſtifies the laughing at his diſcourſes; and no wiſe man can condemn the ridiculing that which is ridiculous. This gives advantage

vantage to the atheiſtical and profane, who will deride the wiſdom of religion when it is diſguiſed under the folly of enthuſiaſm and cant. So that the religion of Chriſt is blaſphemed by the infidel and irreligious, through the extravagancies of thoſe that affect a ſacred cant in their diſcourſes about religion.

2. Enthuſiaſtic canting about religion diſparages it, in the account of thoſe that are rational and judicious. The enthuſiaſt makes a dark and blind repreſentation of religion, ſo that, no man can, by his diſcourſes, tell what it is; and thoſe, who have not wiſer repreſentations of religion from others, muſt need be tempted to think, that religion is nothing, or at leaſt nothing but cant and enthuſiaſm; which are as much nothing as can be. They attempt to expreſs in words, a thing of which they have no notion; and, therefore, thoſe words can have no other appearance, than that of non-ſenſe: but no ſenſible man can have any eſteem of ſuch a diſcourſe, as is without ſenſe, becauſe it is called religious; and, therefore, as canting about religion does expoſe it to the ſcorn of thoſe who are atheiſtical and profane, ſo it ſinks the reputation of it among thoſe that are rational and judicious. Thus it is with thoſe that do not reliſh cant and enthuſiaſm.

Secondly, This canting about religion does hinder the efficacy of it, among thoſe who do reliſh ſuch cant: for, as the true improvement of men is from religious wiſdom and holineſs; ſo this canting about religion is a hindrance to both.

1. Canting about religion is a hindrance to men in religious wiſdom and knowledge. This is plain from the nature of cant, before explained; and, therefore, what pretences ſoever ſuch enthuſiaſts

ſiaſts make to light, it is plain to every one, that they are in darkneſs; and, that they put darkneſs for light, and light for darkneſs. Yet, (1.) ſuch diſcourſes as they make are very eaſily underſtood: And, (2.) any man of underſtanding can very eaſily make ſuch diſcourſes as theirs.

(1.) Though there be no wiſdom or knowledge contained in ſuch enthuſiaſtic canting, yet are thoſe diſcourſes very eaſily underſtood; for this plain reaſon, becauſe there is nothing in them to be learned. There is nothing in ſuch diſcourſes but affection and phraſes; thoſe phraſes ſoon become familiar, and that affection is manifeſt of itſelf.

Thoſe who teach wiſdom muſt needs offer many things which are not, at firſt, underſtood by the learner: the learner muſt give cloſe attention, and take great pains to underſtand the teacher, and cannot perhaps, at the firſt, underſtand him, notwithſtanding all his pains. But where there is no inſtruction, and the canting diſcoures contain none, there a very ſlight attention is ſufficient: and there is no difficulty made to the hearer; which, together with the pathos expreſſed in ſcripture-phraſe, recommends theſe diſcourſes to too many.

(2.) As every man can eaſily underſtand all that is to be underſtood in ſuch canting diſcourſes, ſo any man of parts and confidence can eaſily learn to make thoſe diſcourſes. For, there is no more neceſſary, than to make ſcripture phraſes familiar, by very much reading the bible, and very little underſtanding it; and then, to expreſs as violent affections as may be, in elocution and pronunciation, and the buſineſs is done. Thoſe ignorant people, who have not yet attempted this, do greatly admire it in the unlearned ſpeaker, and think that he muſt needs be taught of God, becauſe he

was never taught at all. And, when they can ſpeak themſelves, they have the ſame opinion of their own performances and abilities, as they had of his.

Thus does empty diſcourſe paſs for the inſtruction of religious wiſdom; though no man can be the more knowing, for his learning religion thus.

2. This canting about religion does hinder the efficacy of it on men, as to righteouſneſs and holineſs. For this gift, if it be one, of canting, and even the reliſh of canting, makes men exceedingly proud; and pride is the fundamental and radical ſin, in which all thoſe ſins, which are ſpiritual and diabolical, are comprehended. Pride is a magnifying of ourſelves, and a vilifying of others; and all ſorts of malice are ſubſervient to pride. The diſcourſes of the enthuſiaſt are cant aad folly, and the defence of thoſe diſcourſes is reviling, railing, and curſing. There are none that do more deſpiſe thoſe who differ from them, or more malign thoſe who oppoſe them, than the enthuſiaſts do; which is a certain ſign that Chriſtianity has no power over them *.

It is poſſible, that thoſe who are guilty of the ſpiritual and diabolical ſins of pride and malice, may not be equally guilty of the beaſtly ſins of drunkenneſs and uncleanneſs: but no judicious Chriſtian thinks the former leſs abominable, though they are not generally ſo ill thought of as the latter are.

Theſe are the pernicious conſequences of canting about religion; that it ſubverts the credit of it, among thoſe who do not reliſh cant; and it hinders the efficacy of religion, among thoſe who do reliſh it.

* Vide W. Penn's Guide miſtaken, p 40, and p. 18.

To conclude. Let a wiſe love of religion teach men a juſt abhorrence of enthuſiaſtical canting about it; and whereſoever we find diſcourſes that have nothing in them, but vehement affections and empty phraſes, though taken out of the ſcripture, know, that This is the canting about religion, to be abhorred for its vicious nature, and intolerable conſequences.

The END of VOLUME FIRST.